

All
about

Costa de la Luz

Issue 217 www.theolivepress.es July 10th - July 24th 2015



Fifteen years after her first taste of Tarifa, Iona Napier (above) returns to the wind capital of Europe and well, once again, gets...



EERIE: Fish being wind-dried at Barbate's Herpac factory

Blown away

ALWAYS wear my billowing maternity-style dress in steaming summer temperatures, smugly satisfied that I'm literally 'cooler' than everyone else. But, be warned this style of outfit should come with an embarrassment warning on the Costa de la Luz, where I spent a day holding down the hem, while loosely resembling an inverted lampshade. Welcome to Tarifa, wind capital of Europe where the naughty levante breezes can play havoc with a girl's dignity.

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SUNKISSED SPECTATORS: Kitesurfing is the best free show in town

Summer here is truly magical

from previous page

Luckily, no-one gives two hoots, as they get on with their day, shopping, surfing, kitesurfing. Oh and looking incredibly cool.

While the wind might be set to Beaufort Scale-blustery, the natives are as serene as a summer snooze, and the tourists (most of them) radiate a distinct sense of style.

With the ratio of dreadheads to skinheads set at approximately one to one, and flip-flops the established dress code, the easy-living, good-time vibe is impossible to miss. Tarifa is rammed with kooky cafes, funky surf shops and boutiques full of sun-bleached and wind-bronzed thrill-seekers taking some time off.

But while the cobbled pavements and airy courtyards are rammed with them in summer months, luckily the locals ensure the town doesn't lose its heart off season.

I meet some of the old guard as I scale a hilly Moorish passage in the old town and happen upon four cosy Spanish ladies gathered in a front room which stinks of acetone.

I'm impertinent enough to stare and Loli - lady of the house-cum-salon - invites me in, plonks me down and embarks on an unsolicited (but much-appreciated) manicure for the princely sum of €4.

"It's just a chiringuito, really," she laughs, flummoxed when I ask the name of her homey salon, before baptising it on the spot 'Salon de Marilu', after her daughter.

"We've lived here all our lives," explains Lola, "If I won the lottery maybe I'd get a place in Malaga for the winter, but summer here is truly magical."

Chattering with these women in their unpretentious hideaway gives me a behind-closed-doors glimpse of the old Andalusia in a town that has seen huge changes over the last decade.

Tarifa was the first point of the Moorish invasion in 711 AD. But Sancho IV El Bravo, whose statue still keeps vigil below the battlements of Guzmán Castle, wouldn't recognise the town he reconquered in 1292.

Behind him, another fast ferry is departing the port for Tangier to join the daily traffic jam in the Straits, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes.

The 14-kilometre crossing takes just 35 minutes so you can do Tangier easily in a day. It is certainly very tempting.

I have had a long affinity to the town as it happens. My first memory of Tarifa came in a series of aircon-less road trip holidays with my family, where we conquered a huge chunk of Spain's most emblematic corners.

On one trip, aged nine and deeply ensconced in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, I was oblivious to the wondrous views as we passed from Malaga into Cadiz and dipped down towards Tarifa's endless white sandy beaches, where the Atlantic kisses the Mediterranean.

I recall being bundled out of the car on an overcast day - with similar wardrobe malfunctions - to a greying, tired town swarming with 'looky-looky men'.

Things certainly looked up when I coerced my mother into buying me a turquoise handbag from a street stall, but I don't remember much else.

Fast-forward 15 years and, although the wind continues to buffet the town's ramparts, the sun has shone favourably on Tarifa.

The Atlantic beach strip, the beaches Los Lances and Valdevaqueros, has become a fashion catwalk for the

Although the wind continues to buffet the town's ramparts, the sun has shone favourably on Tarifa

Lola Mora RESTAURANTE



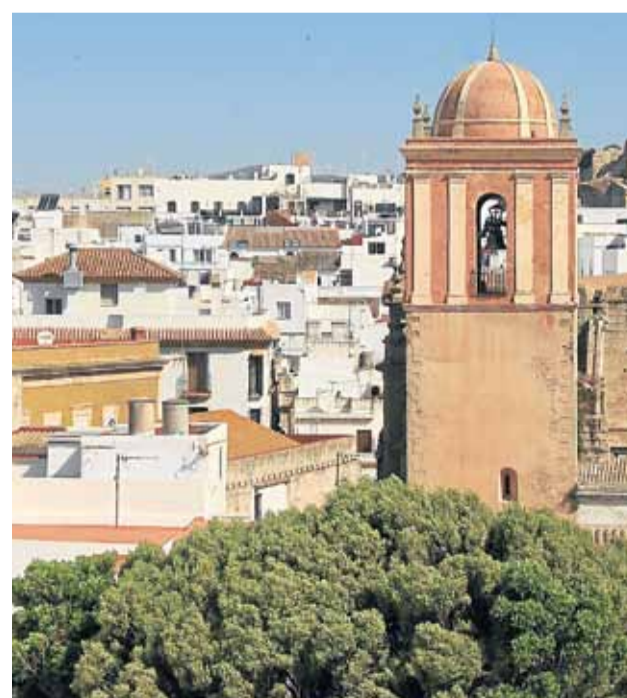
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STUNNING: Roof terrace views across the old town



UNSPOILT: Acres of golden sands on Los Lances beach while (left) Sancho el Bravo and (below) Loli and (inset) DIY spa at Playa Punta Paloma



Hawaii 5.0.set with their Billabong T-shirts and Rip Curl board shorts. Watching them lug their kitesurfs into the water to turn tricks above the waves is the best free show in town!

Other high-adrenalin sports like scuba diving, quad biking and hang gliding, and the more gentle pursuit of whale watching, have ushered in a prosperous new age, creating a polyglot society that has honed the Spanish charm without suppressing it altogether. Surfers Residence, where I spend the night, is the brainchild of a group of young, charismatic German kite surfers cashing in on the booming tourist demand; among them, Tonia, whom I meet by chance in the tourist information office. She came to Tarifa in 2013 to do her kitesurfing instructor qualification and never left. I also meet blues band 'Us': Bob from Los Angeles, Paco from Tarifa and Alberto from Buenos Aires serenade tourists in the bunting-festooned Plaza del Oviedo at dusk.

After a chat, a photo and a hug, their street performance sets me up for an onslaught on Tarifa's vibrant night-life among the bars and clubs of Calle Cervantes.

Next morning, bleary-eyed but upbeat at how many people you can meet here in just a few hours, I burn up the coast towards the capital of Cadiz through a kaleidoscope of colour.

Pale gold sands, turquoise waters, rolling green hills, neon kites and spinning white turbines flick through my peripheral vision at speed until I arrive at - officially - Europe's 10th best beach.

Majestic Playa Bolonia is more sheltered than Tarifa's Los Lances.

It is a stunning spot and from a distance, the people scaling its iconic dune - the largest on

the continent - look like ants. In the foreground you mustn't miss the architectural ruins of Baelo Claudia, dating from 2BC.

Meandering between the Roman columns, it doesn't take a novelist's imagination to picture toga clad townsfolk socialising in the forum or detect the fishy scent of its tuna industry (making a paste called

Garum) perfuming the air. I hop over a barrier to get a better shot of the forum, to the fury of my law-abiding fellow tourists who are using selfie sticks.

But my triumph is short-lived. I get a telling-off from a small army of whistle-blowing caretakers lurking in the shade, who look set to drag me off site like a slave girl.

Half a Fanta on the beach,

before the wind whips my can off the table, followed by an invigorating dip in the Atlantic restore my spirits.

Trailing back along the coast with salt and sand in my hair, I stop off at several beaches: quiet Rio Jara, party central Arte Vida and Punta Paloma where I slap myself all over with mud, the ultimate DIY spa experience.

Days like this really do bring out the best of the Costa de la Luz: an effortless, unspoilt and - as yet - relatively undiscovered stretch of beauty, with an open-minded crowd up for sharing it.

If Cadiz capital is intent on being the jewel in the Costa de la Luz crown, Tarifa is her jingly-jangly silver anklet - less precious, but unequivocally more rewarding in high winds.

And talking of windswept, don't forget your Bridget Jones knickers if you're planning to wear a dress...



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Final frontier

Between the sea and the sierra, Tom Powell travels to the former outpost of Vejer de la Frontera

THE name says it all. Vejer de la Frontera, a hilltop fortress on the Costa de la Luz, was once a last frontier of Christian Spain. The scene of invasions and bloodthirsty battles for hundreds of years, this much sought after strategic outpost changed hands numerous times, finally becoming part of King Ferdinand's Spain in 1248. Later, in 1805, the sound of heavy gunfire could be heard again as Admiral Nelson destroyed the unified French and Spanish Armada at nearby Cape Trafalgar.

Stunning

The Civil War years were violent too, with calls for land reform from residents met by General Franco, sending 24 soldiers to occupy the town, killing anyone who stepped out of line. Nowadays, however, the only thing likely to knock you over in Vejer is the wind. That and the stunning views from this delightful white vil-



EMBLEMATIC: Vejer's main square and (right) Pajarra T-shirt shop

lage, exposed to the gusting Atlantic from its hilltop perch between the sea and the sierra. An unmissable component of any visit to the Costa de la Luz, the medieval quarter oozes history, its castle walls intertwined

with whitewashed homes discovered along twisty-turny, cobbled streets. The Moorish castle – or *Alcazaba* – hides down a side-street lined with eucalyptus trees. The jasmine-scented court-



yard houses the den of the local scout group, who will happily show tourists around the ramparts of what is otherwise mostly residential now.

The streets all tend towards the town's central square, the highly picturesque Plaza de los Pescaitos with its exquisite, bright fountain decorated with 19th-century Triana tiles from Sevilla. The plaza takes its name from the little goldfish – *pescaitos* – which used to swim in the fountain when it was built in the 1920s.

The surrounding streets and alleyways are a hive of activity, belying their sleepy appearance. There are handicraft shops, art galleries and flamenco haunts, as well as cafes, bars and restaurants serving up the best produce from the turbulent Atlantic and encircling farmland and forests.

In particular look out for Pajarra, a shop that for over a decade has provided visitors to the Costa de la Luz with an amazing range of stylish, original, hand-printed t-shirts... right in front of your nose. Above all, make sure to head

LOOK-OUT: Wonderful views from town's walls



up to the turreted walls, from where views spread out across cultivated fields to the mountains and the 5,000 hectare Las Brenas Natural Park. It's easy to see why this immaculate village was voted second Most Beautiful in Spain on Trip Advisor. There is certainly something special about Vejer, which

appears to lord it over its neighbouring fishing villages from its exalted hilltop eyrie, its white cubist houses tumbling down the hillside like tossed dice. And it's a safe bet, if you're new to the Costa de la Luz, that you'll be leaving nothing to chance if you take a trip to the former final frontier.



Weird and wonderful

NMAC, set in lush parkland and forest near Vejer, is worlds away from the typical Costa de la Luz experience. The main feature of the charity-run art refuge is the weird and wonderful sculpture park, boasting some emphatic works by renowned international artists. Dictator Franco and his horse can be found half buried in the ground, while the never-ending rollercoaster of wheelbarrows and household goods presumably represents the monotony of life. The exhibits suddenly appear along a forest pathway, while in huts there are a further series of sculptures and photography. Visit www.fundacionnmac.org



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 CalifaVejer.com

July 10th - July 24th 2015

With a regular influx of talented restaurateurs and chefs it is no surprise that Vejer has become one of Andalucía's culinary capitals, writes Dining Secrets of Andalucía editor Jon Clarke

It is perhaps no surprise to find someone of the calibre of Ellie Cormie in Vejer de la Frontera.

The former owner of five restaurants in Scotland - one with a Michelin star - fits like a glove in the charming white town, whose food culture is one of the richest in Andalucía.

Taking the helm of the stunning new restaurant **Corredera 55**, she has brought her own unique sprinkling of magic to the bustling, competitive local restaurant scene.

Alongside owner James Stuart, who owns a number of hotels and restaurants in the town, they have turned this amazing lookout diner into a genuine must-visit for foodies.

With a fabulous, good value menu, heavy on vegetables and fish, 55 will inevitably succeed.

Add in an adventurous wine list and the drive and panache of Ellie and you have a winner.

Vejer is just the sort of place to find this sort of fine dining.

Like a slow-cooked pork belly, the town has gently fused its ingredients to carve itself into the definitive food capital of Cadiz and perhaps only rivalled by Marbella and Malaga in Andalucía.

Visitors now flock here from around the country and it is incredible how many good places there are to eat in this gem of a white town.

"We set the bar high," explains 55 boss Stuart, who also owns award-winning eaterie **La Califa**. "There is plenty of competition between restaurants and all of us keep taking the level higher in order to get ahead."

Another local entrepreneur Paco Pacheco, at **La Tarantella**, whose family own a trawling business, knows more than anything else that he has to get the offering right... and above all, deliver quality.

"There is so much competition now I had to work out carefully what would be my niche. I certainly know about fresh fish, but figured that what the centre still didn't have was a good Italian restaurant," he explains.

It is this level of thought that has helped to make this small Cadiz town into such a foodie Mecca.

Much of the ingredients of success are down to the local surroundings, which produce some of the best quality ingredients in the world.

The obvious examples are sherry, fish and the wonderful pork and beef from the classic brown 'retinto' cows, which you often see wandering around the nearby hills.

Of course the amazing 'almadraba' blue fin tuna, caught nearby is spectacularly good and the vegetables available are also of a high quality.

Another reason is the type of tourists who visit the town, which has seen a distinctly better heeled crowd than its nearby rivals on the Costa del Sol.

"We don't just rely on beaches," explains restaurateur Ramon at **Vina y Mar**,

which has its own wine shop with over 200 references. "And many of the people who visit are keen food lovers, who come here specifically to eat."

This is certainly the case and the huge mix of restaurateurs, who herald from France, Denmark, Britain and the north of Spain have helped to put together a rich and varied offering for them. Frenchman Damian Giroud at long-running **La Brasa de Sancho** typifies the mix.

Having cooked since his teens - and even had a stint under the Roux brothers at Le Gavroche in London - he knows plenty about cooking.

His near neighbour Javier Duenas at **Garimba** in the main square has perhaps been the biggest success story of the last few years.

The Madrilenos' bustling restaurant serves up a fabulous mix of excellent value tapas, not to mention amazing tuna and steaks.



MAGICAL: Garimba in the main square has a superb mix of tapas

DINING CAPITAL



OFFERING: Califa (top) and Corredera 55 are highlights

Creativity comes in droves and the wine list is one of the best in Cadiz, with a rich and varied mix of bottles.

"We pride ourselves on working incredibly hard, never standing still and keeping the prices down," he says.

But it is on the outside of town in the most obscure of locations that the bar is really being pushed higher and higher.

Up in Santa Lucia you have one of Andalucía's best meat restaurants **Castilleria** that gets better and better each year and next door **Venta el Toro**, one of the most authentic res-

taurants around. Describing its food as 'comida de cuchara', basically home-cooked 'spoon food', it just serves simple, delicious Andalusian classics.

From here, take a ten minute drive up to Patria (see review on P34) to find out why laid back Dane Tomas and his lovely wife Ase are consistently topping many dining polls.

While the menu is compact, the regularly-changing specials are becoming increasingly experimental and always look delightful.

"A lot of our success is the fact that we use so many vegetables," explains Dane Tomas, who lives next door with his family.

A laid back chap, who spends his spare time surfing, he sums it up perfectly: "We know we have to constantly evolve and create new things if we are to keep up with the excellent quality in town."

Last, but anything but least, take a 10 minute ride towards the sea to Barbate, where you will find the stalwart **Campero**, easily one of Spain's top fish restaurants and a lesson in hard work and discipline.

It is here, that Jose Mellero and his team have been serving up the finest blue fin tuna for the last two decades. Miss it at your peril.

It is this level of thought that helped make this small Cadiz town into a foodie Mecca



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Sandblasted and set-free

For what it lacks in size, Sancti Petri makes up for in beauty, history and gusto, writes Tom Powell

THE Atlantic wind is gusting against me as I propel myself through the water aboard my kayak. My destination, Sancti Petri castle, looms ahead, beckoning me on, but the sage advice from the experts who rent out the kayaks is beginning to prove true. Insisting it would be 'impossible' to kayak out to the castle in this wind, I soon give in to spend my time potoling around the charming and chilled-out bay instead.

After all, there are boat trips to the castle where the chance of capsizing is significantly lower. A delightful sight to behold, Sancti Petri castle sitting on an island just offshore is steeped in history. Legend has it that the island was once home to the temple of Hercules, arguably the most important religious building in the ancient world.

Hercules' legacy survives today through a statue at the marina entrance and - as if that wasn't enough - a street name. Meanwhile, Roman emperor Julius Caesar is said to have



HISTORIC: Sancti Petri castle is the stuff of legends

had a dream which foretold his domination of the world while staying at this very castle. It certainly has a lot to live up to, and there is still a magical, somewhat eerie air about the ruined remains. But in this charming little corner of the Costa de la Luz there is much to discover.

Kayaking, sailing, kitesurfing and all manner of watersports are on offer in the marina, along with numerous soft sandy beaches. It is also well worth visiting for

the seafood, brought in daily by the salty, old fishermen who know these seas even better than they know their poor wives. Scrumptious, no-frills fish, squid and prawns are served up by Sancti Petri marina's Club Nautico, along with many other bars and restaurants in the nearby town of Chiclana de la Frontera.

While it is not exactly a tourist hot-spot, a large amount of expats do surprisingly live in the town's satellite area of Pago

del Humo.

In Chiclana they find everything they could need in terms of shopping and business, while in Sancti Petri, and nearby Barrosa beach, they have stunning coastline.

In fact, life seems so good for those unafraid to ditch the Costa del Sol for the Costa del Wind that by the time I'd finished gorging on seafood, I had to drag myself away... and only half of that was because of the wind blowing me in the other direction.

The great escape



Estate agent Glyn Lewis of Andaluz Homes on why he loves the Costa de la Luz

LET'S face it. In this modern world of tricky technology, increasingly-long working days and economic uncertainty, everybody's pretty stressed.

Like it or not, our day-to-day decisions and general sense of well-being are constantly influenced by a barrage of international news events.

After nearly 20 years of helping clients purchase a property here we have received a lot of feedback on why buyers have either been motivated or deterred from purchasing in Andalusia.

This week it is the 'Grexit', last month it was atrocities in Tunisia, while last year's headlines focused on the stock market turbulence.

The vast majority of buyers purchasing in Spain are looking to achieve a common goal; 'peace of mind'. After all, buying a property is a big decision and often involves a large investment.

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PROPERTY OF THE MONTH



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Life's a beach

Despite being a flip-flop down, Rob Horgan scoots along the many amazing beaches of the Costa de la Luz

SUNCREAM, sunglasses, skimpy swimming shorts ... packing for my 40km beachcombing marathon along the Costa de la Luz didn't take much planning. Although I wish I'd brought superglue too.

For during my day-long mini-marathon along the 'coast of light' from Tarifa to Chiclana I only had one working flip flop.

I lost one of them when my toe strap snapped on Playa de Los Bateles, in Conil, while I was fighting a battle with my beach towel against a pesky levante wind.

The longest beach in Conil (one of six) appropriately sounds like it's named after a battle but it actually means 'Beach of Boats'.

A stroll around the whitewashed streets of this former fishing village offers a glimpse into the violent history which blighted the Costa de la Luz for centuries.

The Torre de Guzman - a short, squat tower built by the town's official founder, Guzman El Bueno - offers my first glimpse into the coast's swash-buckling military past.

Founded by the Phoenicians, Conil was later inhabited by the Romans, Vandals, Visigoths and Moors, along with the Brits who smashed the French and Spanish Navies at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

But as Cape Trafalgar, where it all happened, is still some way off I subdue my fluttering beach towel and sit down to take in the view.

It's easy to see the attractions of Spain's wild west coast. In both directions, as far as the eye can see, bronzed bodies are basting on the beach.

Heading east you reach El Palmar, with its endless soft sandy beach, as popular with surfers as sun worshippers these days. Neighbouring Torre del Puerco with its panoramic lookout tower and Zahara, popular with sailors and fishermen, complete the beauty pageant of peaceful playas.

Next up is the emblematic Cabo de Trafalgar lighthouse, the cape where Lord Nelson won the battle but lost his life aboard HMS Victory.

It is actually possible to walk the entire stretch of unbroken sand between Conil and Los Canos de



VARIETY: From hip Canos de Meca to wide open Chiclana (top) and Conil (inset)

Meca, but keep an eye out for dress code signs if you're an unrepentant 'textile' - the derogatory term naturists use for people (like me) who wear shorts.

The numerous hidden coves certainly reveal more than you bargained for!

'Canos', as it's abbreviated, has its own nudist beach at the foot of a steep cliff.

A former hippie colony, the village is no longer teeming with women with flowers in their hair, but it still has that 'edgy' laid-back vibe, with its cool surf dudes.

The 15-minute drive from here to Barbate was by far the most impressive part of my journey.

The road slices through dense pine forest and motorists are treated to an orchestral concert of bird song emanating

An orchestral concert of bird song emanating from the broccoli-shaped trees

from the broccoli-shaped trees. Barbate is a major fishing port and more industrial than its neighbouring towns. A giant tuna sculpture on the long wide promenade, and a tuna museum, are testimonies to its key industry. Along with sun worshippers and watersports enthusiasts, the main beach is also a favourite arena for handball. I sit down among the masses to watch four games being played simultaneously. As the sun begins its downward descent to the

horizon there's one more port of call to make. Zahara de los Atunes, famous for its annual May tapas festival celebrating its almadraba tuna, a method of catching tuna in large circular trap nets at sea handed down by the Phoenicians.

This quaint little town - the most upmarket on the coast - is filled with tapas bars and restaurants, each with their own artistic take on how to serve its namesake fish.

It only seemed right to try some so I ordered up a slab of juicy red tuna steak and ate it while watching the moonlight on the water. After a day discovering the peachy beaches of the Costa de la Luz, there can be no more fitting a finale.

SCENIC: An inlet between Barbate and Zahara



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Casas Karen Los Caños de Meca

Una escapada de ensueño en la Costa de la Luz, donde la naturaleza es lo primero. Durante más de dos décadas Karen ha estado refinando Casas Karen en empatía con su entorno natural. Una mezcla de rústicas "chozas" de paja y típicas casas Andaluzas, entre jardines naturales con poco uso del agua, creando un ambiente relajado y tranquilo. Relájese en su hamaca y disfrute de la brisa del mar, entre bosques de pinos y preciosas playas.

Karen Abrahams de Kortrijk, Bélgica

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Karen Abrahams from Kortrijk, Belgium

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CHILLED: Signposts to the world's kitesurf capitals

Surf 'n' turf

A little slice of Ibiza in Andalucia, no other place better epitomises the hip Tarifa scene than Valdevaqueros, writes Jon Clarke

I'M lying back on a wooden bench watching a profusion of kites bob up and down, almost in tune to the strains of Damian Marley on the sound system.

With a fabulous 'superfood smoothie' in my hand - the so called 'magic maca' served up at the new iZumo! juice bar - I'm about as chilled as could possibly be in Andalucia in July. Welcome to Valdevaqueros, a beach bar/restaurant/all-round-hip-lifestyle venue, where anybody who wants to understand the unique Tarifa vibe needs to visit.

Also serving as the home of Mistral's watersports centre and the launch pad of half of the world's best kitesurfers, this is a place where you can literally spend hours watching the world go by.

"While it used to be just for sporty types, the majority of people come here now because it is super-hip," explains Mistral boss Chris Zijsa.

"It's Mojitos from 3pm but it creates a great atmosphere and it is surprising how many people end up renting out paddle surfs or taking a kitesurf lesson."



Hip: At Graffiti

It is certainly the spot to take up this fun, high-adrenaline sport, with current world leader Liam Whaley learning and basing himself here when not touring the world competing.

I gave it a go last year and while the 40-knot winds wreaked havoc with my classes - I'll admit I let the kite go in a panic and almost lost it as it half blew to Morocco - I still had a fantastic time.

But equally, it is a great place to just take the waters, have

lunch or an afternoon drink at the achingly hip Tumbao beach bar.

The restaurant is great, serving fresh food every day, while the new Burger bar serves up incredible patties.

There is some accommodation at the side and there is even a clothes shop Graffiti, the very epitome of cool, while its new neighbour iZumo! adds to the mix.

Opened by Daniela Di Placido this summer, she has been serving up juices around the world for nearly a decade.

"They are mostly dairy free and I have a big range of minerals and vitamins I add to the drinks, which are great on the stomach."

The story behind Valdevaqueros began over three decades ago when British adventurer Peter Whaley made an unscheduled stop off en route from his home in Ibiza to a holiday in Morocco.

A keen windsurfer he unwittingly found himself on the windiest beach in Europe and had the vision to launch a business there.

It was 1984 and he had soon found a partner (an Australian



board maker Barry Pussell) to help him open the coast's first rental business.

Named 100% Fun (now a successful nearby hotel) - the shack rented out windsurfs and sold clothes from his wife Terese's successful fashion label Graffiti Ibiza.

"It was a low key launch and

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TARIFA



VIBES: Some of the staff at Valdevaqueros including Daniela (right)



we had no idea how well it was going to go," explains Peter today. "What we did have was a great board maker and fantastic, totally Spanish-made clothes." It was the spark to launch the wind revolution on the Costa de la Luz, an industry that now brings in tens of millions of euros every year. But, Peter quickly realised that in order to keep the growing number of surfers happy they needed to offer accommodation, so the following year he and his brother Michael, a builder, bought an old ruined 12-room hostel just up the road. A third brother James, a film director and producer from London, was also soon involved. A big figure in the film business - as well as the manager of Adam and the Ants - it was little surprise that the Hurricane Hotel was soon to become one of

And a - Lucia's hippest places to stay. "I convinced my brothers that we would never make enough money from 12 rooms, so we obtained permission from the town hall to build an extra 23 and brought in an architect," explains James, who is very much still the life and soul of the Hurricane - and its nearby sister hotel Punta Sur. Over lunch at the Hurricane, he continues: "Once opened we converted the bricklayers into our staff, some becoming cooks, others waiters, others receptionists or gardeners. "I explained to the builders



TOP TUCKER: At the stylish restaurant

that making a cake was as easy as making cement. All you had to do was throw the right ingredients into a mixer and stick it in the oven at the right temperature for the appropriate amount of time," he continues. As the local restaurants back then were basic, at best, the brothers installed a herb garden and started to plant and grow their own vegetables. As James had lived in Italy he got a friend to send rucula, or rocket seeds, and the coast's best restaurant was also born. "It just grew and grew organi-

cally," explains Peter, who still spends half the year in Ibiza, where he has a farmhouse. "But now we think we have just the right ingredients to continue to be successful for years to come." Nowadays the group comprises four hotels - The Hurricane, Punta Sur, Valdevaqueros (100% Fun was sold five years ago) and a new hotel recently opened in Jericoacoara, Brazil, appropriately also a kitesurfing hotspot. "Called Hurricane Jeri it is the first stylish five star hotel there and we believe in winter a lot of the cool northern European

JUMPING HIGH!

The Whaley story is not over yet with the next generation already making waves. Peter's son Liam Whaley has won the Tarifa kitesurf championship and is now ranked second in the world and currently leading this year's competition. Kiting since the age of nine, he lives and breathes the sport. "There is never a shortage of wind here," he tells the Olive Press. "And it is one of the most fun places to live." Travelling the world, he has his own sponsorship with Cabrinha and is closely linked to Mistral, which rents boards and kites at Valdevaqueros.



KITE KING: Jon Clarke meets Liam Whaley



CHILL OUT: Young holidaymakers at Tumbao

Clubbing together

WHETHER it's a hair-raising, adrenaline-pumping ride on Tarifa's waves attached to a kite, or a chilled-out pootle atop a paddleboard, Club Mistral is always prepared in Tarifa's unpredictable climate. The international firm has two bases near Tarifa, from which kitesurfing, windsurfing and stand-up paddle-boarding are available for everyone from complete novices to lifelong enthusiasts. One is at the stunning Valdevaqueros beach, and the other a few kilometres further south at the Hurricane hotel. The team includes personal fitness trainers and nutrition experts, who are developing special fitness, physiotherapy and injury recovery programmes. Sailing excursions are also a regular feature of the busy summer programme, which is best kept on top of through the Club Mistral Tarifa Facebook page or by visiting www.club-mistral.com



MOVERS AND SHAKERS: James (left) and Peter with wife Terese

crowd will choose to go there," explains Peter. Given his previous eye for business, it is probably very likely to be the case.

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GONE WITH THE WIND!

The Costa de la Luz is Europe's definitive kitesurfing capital

TAKE a look in the skies above the beaches on the Costa de la Luz and chances are you will see a mass of colourful kites bobbing and weaving in the breeze. The sport of kitesurfing has taken the area by storm, creating a commercial dynamo in its wake. Invented in 1984 by the Legaignoux brothers the two key spots for kitesurfing are by the Trafalgar lighthouse in Canos de Meca, and along Tarifa's two main beaches. This adrenaline-packed sport now completely eclipses windsurfing in popularity among thrill-seekers.

"There is nothing like it," explains kitesurfing instructor Patricia Suarez, owner of Tarifa Air Force (TAF) in Tarifa. "It is an incredible sport which is fantastic for people of all ages... and this area is definitely Europe's number one spot to practice it." This is down to the exceptionally mild winters as well as one of the best wind currents in the world. The *Poniente*, in particular, is an extremely constant easterly wind from Portugal, measuring between two and five on the Beaufort scale. The other dominating wind – better for windsurfers – is the *Levante*, which comes from the southeast over Africa and builds up for a few days be-



SURF'S UP: In Tarifa

fore peaking at eight or nine on the Beaufort scale. "When I saw people jumping 15, 20 metres high, I knew I had to do it," adds Patricia, whose shop stocks a great range of kit as well as the best in fashionable clothing. "The feeling you get on the waves is incomparable." Because of the calmness of the sport, kitesurfing companies such as Club Mistral, Hot Stick and Tarifa Air Force



can teach clients to kitesurf at any age, from retirees to children as young as eight years old.



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COMING TO A SHORE NEAR YOU: Whales in Straits of Gibraltar, and (below) tuna half-eaten by orcas

Whale of a time

SUN-SEEKERS and surfers aren't the only ones who head to the Costa de la Luz every year. Sharing the shores are pods of whales which can regularly be seen frolicking in the Straits of Gibraltar. A number of local companies – such as the best established Turmares Tarifa – take guests on boat trips to see these mammals, with a slant on marine conservation. The orcas are attracted to the sparkling Mediterranean by the large amount of tasty blue fin tuna, which occasionally brings them into conflict with local fisherman. "Luckily for us, orcas come here each year to feed," Andre at Turmares explains. "On the other hand, that's not so good for the presence of the Bluefin tuna." Andre adds that despite the 'killer' name attributed to the most famous whale they are actually 'harmless to humans' although they do feed on 32 different mammal species. Along with the killers, pilot, sperm and fin whales migrate from the Atlantic, as well as three different types of dolphins – common, striped and bottlenose. All of which can be seen during boat trips, depending on your luck! For more information visit www.turmares.com



Photos by Pablo Gill

HOTTEST SPORT: Kitesurf fan and (below) Patricia at TAF



Tarifa Air Force even offers special 'children courses.' "You start with a small kite and as you learn you keep trying bigger and bigger kites," says Patricia. This keeps the level of power always in line with the level of experience of the kitesurfer. To the skeptic, she assures that despite its appearance, the sport is much safer than skiing or snowboarding, with many less serious accidents.

Of course, that doesn't mean you should just take a board and a kite onto water without lessons. However, the learning curve is astonishingly quick. In general, beginners need three days to learn the basics, and in only five days are out kitesurfing on their own. Hot Stick, Club Mistral and Tarifa Air Force rent out kites, wetsuits, helmets and lessons from as low as €50 per day.

Biking paradise

TARIFA is a mountain biker's dream. Great views, a feeling of adventure, varied trails and great descents. It has it all. You can go cross country on full days along stony coastal paths beside the Straits of Gibraltar with amazing views of Morocco and the Atlas Mountains, medieval herding tracks over rolling farmland/wetlands, or winding trails through ancient cork oak forests. All within a lush green landscape with craggy sandstone peaks and mountains that roll into the sea. Rides take from two to seven hours, and most start from the heart of the town. "You can expect to hear the screech of an eagle, see thousands of buzzards crossing the straits and fields of wild flowers," explains keen cyclist Tony Cassidy. "There are also plenty of Roman ruins and even remains of Prehistoric Man," he adds. "It's an outdoor enthusiast's wonderland." Bikes can be rented for around €20 a day from a number of places.



Chukkas away!

FOR chino-clad gents and Pimms-sipping women look no further than Atlanterra. Accessed via Zahara de los Atunes, the small village comes to life for one weekend every September. Usually held on the last weekend of the month, polo players from around the globe descend on the beach for an action-packed polo tournament. Four teams are invited to take part, with the final taking place on the Sunday evening.

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Learning the lingo

HAVING been in business for 26 years, it can rightfully claim to be one of the oldest language schools on the Costa de la Luz. And that is no surprise, with Hispalense school, in Tarifa, having a successful knack of bringing pupils into contact with the real world. Boasting 12 highly qualified native teachers with Spanish as the focus (German, English and French are also available) pupils are encouraged to get out onto the beaches and into the sea in the afternoons after a morning in the classroom. "The students love it because you can be so active in Tarifa," says boss Gaspar Cuesta, who joined the school 24 years ago and has been at the helm for eight of those. "From windsurfing and kitesurfing to wine-tasting and tapas tours, there's so much to do and we help to organise it all. "And we make people feel at home with customized classes and lots of accommodation possibilities if they need it." Class sizes are small with a maximum of eight students with a mix of adults and younger students from people studying for a few days to months at a time - everyone is welcome! For more information visit www.hispalense.com



BACK TO SCHOOL: Hispalense students



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WHERE TO EAT



NEW BROOM: Mourat at 7

APPROPRIATELY named **Tesoro** (treasure), it is very much a treasure hunt arriving at what is easily one of Andalusia's most charming places to eat. High up in the hills between Tarifa and Bolonia, it takes a good deal of wit and guile to continue on the track to the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But it is well worth the trip, with owners Jesus and Juana, creating a genuine paradise overlooking rows of vines and a sea of undulating umbrella pines. Aside from the fabulous food

Costa de la Lunch

Few places in Spain have such a great range of good places to eat, writes Dining Secrets of Andalusia editor Jon Clarke

- including fresh langoustines and a classic 'retinto' steak typical of the region - the views over the Gibraltar straits to Africa are impossible to improve. Back down in Tarifa itself you are spoilt for choice with a string of excellent places to eat. In particular head to Calle Alameda, where you will find

four or five of the finest restaurants on the Costa de la Luz. Starting from the tourist office downwards you will find the talented father-and-son team of Daniel and Javier, who run neighbouring restaurants La Ternera Mimosa and Lola Mora. Open for well over a decade, both have a distinctly Medi-



FAMILY FIRM: Daniel and Javier

terranean flavour, while **La Ternera Mimosa** now has its own charcoal grill, top quality steaks and some amazing artisan pizzas and grilled fish. **Lola Mora** is better known for fish and has the prestige of having won Tarifa's best tuna tapa competition (a tuna tartare in puff pastry with a beetroot *salmorejo*). Next door, look out for the

WHERE TO STAY

Where sleeping is a breeze!

The Costa de la Luz is a stylemeister's dream for places to stay, writes Jon Clarke

THE Costa de la Luz is literally creaking with hip places to stay from beachside gems to inland *cortijos* and from grand townhouses to campsites. In Vejer you would be hard pressed to beat the seminal **Casa de Califa**, in the town's loveliest square, surrounded by its best restaurants. The Moorish building sits around a charming central patio, where guests take breakfast and dine under candlelight each evening. Historic in the extreme, the building, and its sister **Triperia**, oozes history and has been extremely well renovated. However if you are after something more rustic, then another great option is **Hotel Sindhura**, which is peace personified with some of the most amazing views. Run by friendly Ana and her husband, it has a lovely pool and, best of all, its own exceptionally good restaurant. Nearby, right on the beach, in Canos de Meca, is **Madreselva**, set around a central courtyard and with a decent pool for the kids to splash in. Also in Canos, just a short walk to the Trafalgar light-



HIPPY CHIC: Luxurious Casas Karen

house, is evocative **Casas Karen**, a super-chilled retreat, sitting in a wild spot with the natural park behind as a backdrop. Between pinewoods and beach, the collection of *chozas* (straw huts) and traditional Andalusian farmhouses blends perfectly into the landscape. It is also one of the greenest hotels around, with all waste being recycled and water is drawn from a well. Massages and yoga can be arranged, or guests can simply relax in a Mexican hammock. In Tarifa you have an equally good group of stylish hotels. On the beach, the best established is the **Hurricane**, which is now 25 years old and run by the coast's long-serving expats, brothers James and Peter Whaley, who also own the more luxurious **Punta Sur** across the road.

Both hotels have their own restaurants and both serve up a great range of activities on the beach and in the hotel, including pilates and yoga classes every day, plus a brand new spa. Another great new option in the centre of the town itself is **La Rosa de los Vientos**, which is an attractive place in a great location. Set up by Seval and her partner Mourat, it has a nice range of rooms and a fantastic roof terrace and central atrium to chill out. Last, but definitely not least, if you are looking for one of the best beachside escapes then **Hotel Antonio** in Zahara de los Atunes is wonderful. Sitting right on one of Andalusia's top beaches, this is a professionally-run and great value hotel with an amazing restaurant to match.



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July 10th - July 24th 2015



TREASURE: The view from Tesoro and (right) chef Jesus and trainee

ever improving French joint **Petit Bistro**, which has been refurbished and reborn with a new menu combining owners Veronica Rodriguez and Benoit Mangeon's favourite influences with the best local produce. The pair, who started out selling crepes in a backstreet of Tarifa 15 years ago, now regularly turn out some of the town's most refined dishes. Expect to try dishes like basil-perfumed gazpacho, as well as his recent tuna salad with mango and beetroot.

Favourite

If Italian is your thing, then two paces away you will want to check out **Trattoria**, run by local business magnate Luciano, from Naples. A long time favourite, with its authentic pizza oven, the restaurant is slowly adapting to the town's more demanding diners and focusing on finer ingredients, such as boletus mushrooms from Zamora and black truffles from Soria. The vegetables are mostly organic and delivered each day by Alberto, thanks to Luciano's fondness for his country's Slow Food Movement. Another long-term stalwart is **Pescaderia**, run by Victor, a former architect from



FISH FANATIC: Victor (above left) and tuna sashimi

Argentina, who looks like Joe 90 from Thunderbirds - when grafting away in the kitchen with trademark scientist-style glasses. A massive tuna fan, boss Victor goes out of his way to prize the very best specimens out of the clutches of the Japanese... and is not scared to shell out thousands for the right fish. "It is vital as our clients absolutely love it," he explains. Enjoy the separate tuna menu including a great carpaccio, sashimi and best of all tartare, all washed down by some excellent wines.

If it is beach dining you are harking for then a true chestnut is **Bien Estar**, right on the beach. It is open all year and claims to be the southernmost restaurant in Europe and has been set up by three friends with over 50 years of catering experience between them. And in Tarifa, there is yet more with the opening of a new restaurant **7**, where there is a wonderful mix of Spanish, international and oriental flavours, thanks to its chef Mourat, who is a half

continues page 34



AUTHENTIC: Trattoria

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WHERE TO EAT



COASTAL LEADER: Campero and (inset) a creation



Culinary adventure

from page 33

Russian, half Moroccan jew. Having done his time cooking in Germany, where his wife heralds from, he spent a few years cooking in Andalusia, before opening his own restaurant. Heading up the coast, if it is Atlantic blue fin tuna you are after, Andalusia's best place to eat must surely be **El Campero**, in Barbate. Here, Jose 'Pepe' Melero has catered for celebrities, poli-



INVENTIVE: Tuna salad at Petit Bistro



ticians and fellow chefs for two decades and runs the restaurant with military precision, often serving well over 300 people for lunch alone. The place has just been through a stylish transforma-



It is almost the very definition of a 'dining secret'. High in the hills in an obscure location ten minutes from Vejer, Patria is one of those destination restaurants that you really have to make an effort to visit. Hidden away in a scruffy hamlet, arriving is certainly part of the adventure. And, once there, the contrast between the humdrum nearby houses and the pretty rural diner couldn't be more distinct. For owners Ase and Thomas Donso have created a beautiful escape that wouldn't be out of place in the Picos de Europa or Provence. Everything from its flagstone terrace to vine-clad veranda is geared towards seduction. Surrounded by vines, oleander and olive trees, its candlelit

Head to the hills

Any foodie would be mad to miss a visit to Vejer's true dining secret Patria, writes Jon Clarke

wooden tables and stylish interior draw you in further. And thankfully your Danish hosts do not disappoint when it comes to the food. Split into a three-course menu

of the month and a more detailed a la carte offering, you will be spoilt with lots of vegetables, and almost all seasonal produce.

As Thomas explains: "The joy of cooking is about what's in peak season. There is no need to import anything from far away."

He raves, quite rightfully about the quality of the local produce, and adds: "We work around what our suppliers can provide us local be it wild asparagus, rabbit or bulls' heart tomatoes."

"It is all about being able to adjust, change and cre-



CHARMING: Patria's flagstone terrace

ate." And this is certainly what he and his Peruvian sous chef Pedro are doing in the kitchen.

The food is as light, fresh and exciting as you could possibly expect in Andalusia.

A tartaki of thinly sliced beef served with pickled Swedish-style vegetables is a wonderful starter and only beaten by the original tomato and mozzarella salad served with basil ice cream and pine nuts. Smoked sardines come out with pickled

figs, while thinly sliced duck comes out with a coriander and orange source and delicious balls of foie gras that explode in the mouth.

The red snapper served with asparagus and green beans sautéed in butter and pine nuts, was about as beautifully cooked as could be imagined.

And finally, the ingenious 'cerviche of Strawberry' pudding with lime, chilli, crème anglaise and pistachio was a wonderful way to finish.

With an interesting and varied wine list fused with a dozen Sherries and interesting hand-picked wines from around Spain, in particular an interesting red from Cuenca, called Patio, you will be in capable hands.

To use an old phrase of former dictator General Franco 'Todo por la Patria'!



TEAM: Pedro and boss Thomas



tion, while last year it opened a sister restaurant in Zahara. One place that really must be experienced if visiting Zahara is **Antonio's**, one of the best established hotels on the coast. Sitting on a fantastic white sandy beach, this restaurant is amazing and run with professional aplomb and with easily some of the best fish in Spain.

Another excellent new find is **Ventorrillo El Nene**, in the strategic town of Facinas, making it the perfect lunch

NO BULL: The grilling kings at El Nene

stop for anyone travelling between Tarifa and Vejer or Conil. Absolutely steeped in bullfighting memorabilia, it un-

surprisingly serves up some of the best meat on the coast, with an incredible *retinto* steak, one of the best I have ever tried.

All cooked by the owners on their outside grill, you dine under bulls' heads, beside a mock-up bullring and with bullfighting posters all around.

Finally, over in Vejer you will find an amazing mix of good places to eat, including Patria, Corredera 55, Califa and Castilleria... Turn to page 25 for a more in-depth look.



BATTLE: Two types of tuna tartare at Antonio's

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